MONTHLY NOTICES

OF THE

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A. A. COMMON, LL.D., F.R.S., President, in the Chair.

Hugh Lancelot Aldis, 67 Dieppe Street, West Kensington, W.;
William Ernest Cooke, M.A., First Assistant, Observatory, Adelaide, South Australia;
Alpin G. Fowler, M.Inst.C.E., 1 Cambridge Road, Norbiton;
David Edward Hadden, Alta, Buena Vista Co., Iowa, U.S.A.;
Rev. Robert Killip, Sale, near Manchester;
George Handley Knibbs, University, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia;
Frederick William McCarthy, 20 Chepstow Place, Bayswater, W.;
Charles J. Merfield, Department of Public Works, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia;
Captain Hugh Griffith Quirk, Baymount, Vico Road, Dalkey, co. Dublin,

were balloted for and duly elected Fellows of the Society.

The following candidates were proposed for election as Fellows of the Society, the names of the proposers from personal knowledge being appended:—

Thomas Edward Knightley, Architect, Clive House, Tulse Hill, S.W. (proposed by Edward Carpmael);
James Cavan, M.A., Eaton Mascott Hall, Shrewsbury (proposed by A. C. D. Crommelin).

Seventy-seven presents were announced as having been received since the last meeting, including amongst others :—

A. Fowler, Popular Telescopic Astronomy, presented by the publishers ; photographic enlargements from a negative of the Moon by MM. Lœwy and Puiseux, presented by Dr. L. Weinek ; lantern slides from Professor Keeler's drawings of *Mars*, 1892, presented by Mr. Newbegin.

Note on the Indexing of Scientific Papers. By H. Seward, B.A.

In the present condition of scientific periodical literature the question of a subject-matter index is one of very great importance, and the necessity of some such work is yearly becoming more evident. As one who has had a large experience in indexing, especially in indexing of a scientific character, I venture to offer a few remarks on the subject, in accordance with the suggestion of the Secretaries in the last *Monthly Notices*.

First of all it is to be pointed out that a good index can only be made by an expert. It might be supposed that any person of ordinary literary or scientific attainments could make a satisfactory index, but everyone who has studied the subject knows that this view is entirely erroneous. Careful training in classification is absolutely necessary, and this is in most cases the work of years. From this it follows that the system (of indexing by authors), suggested by the Secretaries of the Royal Society, and tentatively adopted by our own Secretaries, can only be regarded as a very temporary one, and that it is one which is certain to break down in practice. The cause of the inevitable failure of this system is not so much the fact that authors often take a view of the importance of their own work which is not shared by their readers, but lies in the impossibility of obtaining uniformity by this method. Thus, to take a simple case : suppose papers on a total eclipse of the Moon are to be indexed, it will be found that these will be variously indexed under the words, "Total," "Eclipse," "Moon," "Lunar," by different authors (without counting such probable entries as "Colour of Eclipsed Moon," "Red Colour of Eclipsed Moon," "Earth's Shadow, Radius of," "Penumbra," &c., &c.), and the unfortunate compilers of an index will have to wade through masses of useless verbiage, meanwhile running the risk of missing something of importance. It can easily be seen that subject matter of a more complicated description, such as, say, "Measurements of the Wave Lengths of the principal lines in the Spectrum of *Nova Aurigæ* as determined by Photography," will lead us at once to hopeless confusion. We are thus drawn to the conclusion, which is, in fact, well known to trained indexers, that the first essential of an index is uniformity ; the same subject matter must always be